A Metal Padlock and Keys from Southern Arabia. *By Professor R. B. Serjeant, School of Oriental and African Studies, London. With a text figure*

65

In a previous note ('A Battle Axe from Habban,' MAN, 1953, 176) I referred to the ingenious padlock known as *Kufl Ghuthaimi*, or Ghuthaimi lock, which is in use in Southern Arabia. C. v. Landberg, *Dialèctes* (Leiden, 1901), Vol. I, p. 85, has already published a note on this type of lock with drawings, but his study is so inaccessible to any but specialists that it has seemed worth while to publish this example which I purchased in the Hadrami town of Shibam. About the same time I bought four keys for Ghuthaimi locks from a junk merchant in Shibam market.

The padlock, No. 48.1972 in the Cambridge University Museum of Archæology and Ethnology, is illustrated with its key in position in its channel. The part of the padlock which can be wholly withdrawn appears in the half-disengaged position on the right of the photograph. The free ends of the bars which act as a spring, and catch inside the box of the lock, can be perceived on its lower leg. The key is inserted at the left-hand side of the box of the padlock where a small groove shows in the photograph in the lower ridge of the key channel. When the lock is closed, *i.e.* when the right section is rammed home, it can be opened by drawing the key to the right end of its channel; this releases the spring bars.

The padlock and four keys (known as *iklid* (Nos. 48.1942*a–d*)) are all made of iron, the lock showing traces of brass at the joints and elsewhere. The latter has been decorated with wavy lines scratched on the side of the box, and it bears the inscription "*'Amal Ghuthaim*, the work of Ghuthaim.' According to Landberg the Al Ghuthaim come from the East Yemenite town of Harib, and, writing in 1901, he states that some of them were still working at San'a', capital of the Yemen. I doubt if these locks are made today because, being entirely hand-made, they are expensive, and cheap Indian or European padlocks are bought instead. These last are called in Hadramawt *kufl abu hirz*, amulet locks, because their shape reminds the Arab of leather amulets worn on the arm, or silver amulets worn round the neck. It may be remarked that in ancient Arabian literature, more particularly in the verse, weapons and other objects are not infrequently described by the name of the craftsman famed for his skill in their manufacture. The commentaries usually give the name of an individual craftsman as the origin of the appellation, but it is more likely to be the name of a family group engaged in the craft. To the Hadrami certain family names immediately suggest certain trades or crafts.

The keys, which seem to have been ornamented with some tooled work after forging, are of two distinct types. One wonders whether the two inner specimens, which differ from the other three keys, are of local Hadrami manufacture or represent a less developed form than the rest.

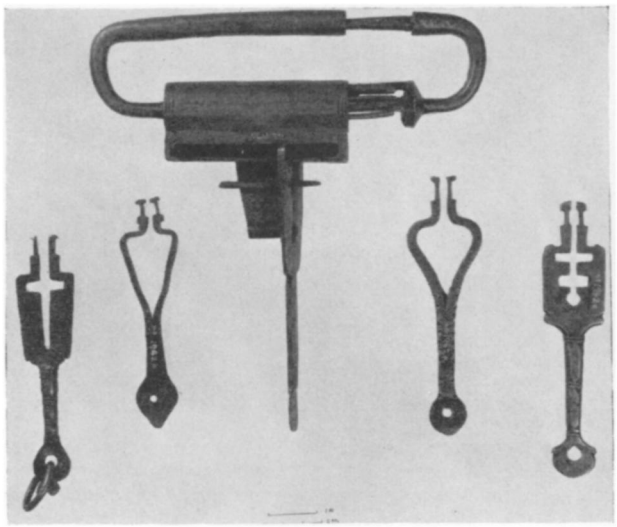

FIG. 1. PADLOCK AND KEYS FROM SOUTHERN ARABIA

Photograph: Cambridge University Museum of Archæology and Ethnology

The Ghuthaimi padlock is made in various sizes, this being the largest I have actually seen. In Shibam and elsewhere in the Aden Protectorates they are used to padlock the doors of shops in the market. All those in Shibam must, I think, have been imported from the Yemen by caravan from Harib. Wooden locks are of course still very much in use, and manufactured to this day.

I am again indebted to the courtesy of Dr. G. H. S. Bushnell for the photograph and permission to publish it; he showed me a Korean padlock which works on a similar principle, also in the Museum.

CORRESPONDENCE

A Trobriand Medusa? *Cf.* MAN, 1954, 158; 1958, 65, 90, 160. *With a text figure*

66

SIR,—In 1954 there was discussion in MAN on a suggested interpretation of the designs characteristic of some shields from the Trobriand Islands. I note that the interpretation given by Dr. E. R. Leach has evoked some correspondence including a recent letter in MAN (1958, 90).

I have no personal knowledge of the Trobriand Islands but as Curator of Anthropology have paid some attention to building up our ethnographical collections from the New Guinea area. For the past 40 years we have been exhibiting in our New Guinea gallery four of these decorated shields (our numbers, A.7409–A.7412) from the Trobriand Islands. These four bear closely similar designs and all were collected before the year 1920. Associated with the display is an illustrated explanation, which was first put there by my predecessor, Sir Edward Stirling, prior to 1920. The illustration is in colour and depicts a shield, which is not one of those on exhibition. However, any differences are very slight and of little consequence except as indicating that the data did not come to us associated with any of the exhibited specimens.

I send you a black and white reproduction of this drawing and its legend. There is no indication whence this explanation came, but it is obvious that it came from an authentic native source. It seems not to have been published, or if it has been, at least it has not been noticed by any of those taking part in the present discussion. It seems worthwhile therefore to send it to you in the hope that it may help to broaden the discussion on the interpretation given by Dr. Leach.

It is just possible that our data were supplied to us by Professor Malinowski. It will be recalled that Malinowski did his first field work in New Guinea under the friendly eye of Sir Edward Stirling. Indeed his first paper, 'The Natives of Mailu,' was published under the supervision of Stirling in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, Vol. XXXIX (1915), pp. 494–704. Incidentally we possess the original corrected typescript at the South Australian Museum.

The accompanying illustration (fig. 1) is labelled 'Trobriand Island Shield and an Interpretation of its Design.' Beneath the drawing of the shield it is stated: 'The design on this shield is similar to those exhibited in this case. It has been interpreted as having the

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